



Children's
Advocacy
C E N T E R
OF JACKSON COUNTY

Healing Children
at the
Speed of Love

March 12, 2019

Chair Keny Guyer
Vice Chari Noble
House Committee on Housing and Human Services Member

My name is Tammi Pitzen and I have the honor of being the Executive Director of the Children's Advocacy Center of Jackson County. I have had the privilege of filling this role for the last five and half years. I have dedicated almost 30 years of my life to working in the field of child abuse and in roles centered on protecting children from abuse. I am writing this letter today to ask for support of HB 3178.

This funding is essential to providing equitable access to abused children across the State not only by increasing capacity to serve these children but also by allowing our Child Abuse Intervention Centers to retain our investment in our highly skilled professionals who work so hard on the front lines. It is not a question of if you will experience "compassion fatigue" but a matter of when. Increased funding would allow for the retentions of staff by "right sizing" workloads and by providing a foundation of funding that will allow us to begin sustaining the rapid growth in our programs needed by the ever increasing demands for services.

In the last three years, while national statistics indicate that abuse is decreasing, my own center's service numbers are increasing steadily. In 2018 we served more than a hundred more children than we did in 2017. This growth does not appear to be slowing down.

We provide forensic interviews, medical services, therapy services, and support and advocacy services to children who have been abused ages 0 to 18 and their non-offending family members. We do not charge families for these services nor do we charge the referring law enforcement or child protection agencies for these services. However, professional, evidenced based, trauma informed specialize services do require a certain level of financial investment.

Without these early intervention services being provided in a coordinated way to the abused children we serve, the outcomes are bleak. This is evidenced by the ACES research. When we intervene and provide services we can mitigate some of the impact over the span of a lifetime. Many of the "Big" societal issues facing Oregon today could be addressed by investing in early intervention services for abused children. Many times homelessness, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health issues and criminal activity can be link back to abuse in childhood. We, as Oregonians, will be investing money in addressing the issues caused by child abuse. It is a matter of when and how we will invest. We can do so early and change the trajectory of an abused child's life or we can do so later in the form of the criminal justice system, the overburdened mental health system, or both.

Thank you for your time and consideration of support of HB 3178.

Sincerely,


Tammi L. Pitzen
Executive Director

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